

I fully support the FISTS proposal although my perspective may be somewhat biased since I have been operating CW since 1957. I have long learned that in terms of economy of spectrum space and under marginal conditions CW will punch through when no other techniques will, short of relatively sophisticated digital equipment or signal processing approaches such as Fourier Transforms.

Now the question arises why not get rid of SSB as opposed to CW? The obvious answer is that learning CW takes effort and SSB does not. In this era of “lowering the bar” and making sure “no one gets left behind” many segments of our social, educational, and technical universes have been compromised. Of course the underlying common denominator that fuels this “dumbing down” agenda is dollars, politics, and egos. I would hope that the FCC, although a political animal, can see past this degrading trend and focus toward building the nation that the founding fathers envisioned as opposed to trying to force the workers and the non-workers into the same mold.

If the powers that be are hell bent on getting rid of CW, I would advance an adjunct to the FISTS proposal. The FCC Amateur Radio Exams have always been unique from the standpoint that both a technical and communications expertise have to be demonstrated to receive a license. I won't ramble off into the technical side of the coin involving memorizing one's way through an exam. It is clear enough that we have a whole crew of extras who don't know the difference between impedance and reactance, ad nauseam.

My suggestion revolves around the fact that everyone just doesn't naturally love CW. That is understandable. I don't like pinto beans. As an alternative to learning CW perhaps the prospective amateur could become proficient in another communications mode i.e. EME, SSTV, digital modes, repeater operations, signal processing, etc. and take an exam in one of these areas as opposed to CW. This would not mean more work for the FCC, so no dollars would be involved. The VEC would be responsible for developing the alternate tests that could be phased in as the exams are developed. The change would be transparent to the FCC licensing process.

The ball has got to stop rolling down the road to mediocrity somewhere. The FCC Exam structure is as good a place to start as anywhere.